

Message Text

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70

ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 345

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 8779

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, XG, MOPS

SUBJ: ISRAELI POWS

1. FOREIGN MINISTER ABBA EBAN TOOK OCCASION OF OUR MEETING TODAY TO GIVE ME COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF POW SITUATION, IN CONTEXT OF IMPORTANCE OF THE POW ISSUE IN ISRAEL. HE NOTED THAT IN THE MEETING OF ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN GENERAL YESTERDAY THE EGYPTIANS TURNED OVER THE NAMES OF FORTY ISRAELI WOUNDED AND ISRAEL EXPECTS EGYPT TO PROVIDE THE FULL LIST OF PRISONERS. HE ADDED HOWEVER THAT THERE WAS STILL NO INFORMATION AS TO EGYPTIAN WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW ICRC VISITS AS PROVIDED FOR BY ARTICLE 122 OF THE GENEVA CONVENTION.

2. WHILE NOTING THE LIMITED EGYPTIAN ACTION TO DATE, HE STATED THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD A LONG WAY TO GO AND THAT IT WAS ISRAEL'S AIM TO HAVE A TOTAL EXCHANGE OF POWS WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO. EBAN MADE IT CLEAR THAT ISRAEL'S DECISION CONCERNING HUMANITARIAN MEASURES TOWARD THE THIRD ARMY WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO FURTHER EGYPTIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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PROGRESS ON THE POW ISSUE. HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT ISRAEL WAS ASKING ONLY THAT EGYPT FULFILL ALL OF ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE GENEVA CONVENTION.

3. IF THE ATMOSPHERE IN ISRAEL CONCERNING POWS IN EGYPT IS GRIM, SAID EBAN, THE ATMOSPHERE CONCERNING POWS IN SYRIA IS DEADLY. HE EMPHASIZED THAT QUICK ICRC VISITS TO THE POWS HELD BY SYRIA AS THE ONLY MEANS OF INSURING THE SURVIVAL OF THESE PRISONERS. HE NOTED THAT THE GOI WAS BEGINNING TO DOCUMENT SYRIAN ATROCITIES WHICH CREATED TERRIBLE APPREHENSION IN ISRAEL ABOUT THE FATE OF THESE MEN. IN THIS RESPECT, HE STATED FRANKLY THAT ISRAELIS WERE AFRAID THAT THE SYRIANS WERE DELAYING TURNING OVER ANY LISTS OF POWS TO THE ICRC UNTIL THEY COULD SEE WHICH ISRAELIS SURVIVED THE TORTURES WHICH WERE ASSOCIATED WITH SYRIAN INTERROGATIONS OF PRISONERS.

4. EBAN EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION FOR THE EFFORTS OF THE ICRC AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN HELPING TO CONVINCE THE EGYPTIANS THAT THEY HAD HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATION UNDER THE GENEVA CONVENTION. HE NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR KIDRON WOULD BE MAKING THE ISRAELI HUMANITARIAN CASE ON POWS TO THE ICRC REPRESENTATIVES IN GENEVA AND HE HOPED THAT THE US REP WOULD SUPPORT AMBASSADOR KIDRON'S EFFORTS. I ASSURED THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT WE WOULD DO WHAT WE COULD TO BE HELPFUL.

5. COMMENT. EBAN WAS DESCRIBING WHAT IS A FACT OF LIFE IN ISRAEL: GREAT, ALMOST CONSUMING CONCERN WITH POWS--THE SUBJECT OF A SPECIAL KNESSET DEBATE TODAY. I HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT WE CAN IN GENEVA--AND ELSEWHERE--EMPHASIZE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF A HUMANITARIAN ISSUE ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE HOPES FOR PEACE IN THE MID EAST.
KEATING

CONFIDENTIAL

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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